Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. The amendments find full support in the original specification and/or claims.

Listing of Claims:

1. (**Currently Amended**) A computer implemented method for assessing an identity of an individual, said method comprising the steps of:

utilizing a processor to execute a program of instructions tangibly stored on a storage medium of a computer to perform method steps, the method steps comprising:

(a) accepting an input from an individual;

(b) attributing a user group to the individual based upon the input;

(c) issuing a cue associated with the user group; and

(d) repeating steps (a) - (c) until the identity of the individual is assessed, the identity being assessed incrementally over a period of time via a series of issued cues;

wherein said repeating step further comprises performing a partial determination of the identity of the individual via issuing a stream of cues over time when there is insufficient input provided by the individual to perform a full identification.

2. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to claim 1, wherein said

repeating step comprises repeating steps (a)-(c) until the identity of the individual is

determined; and wherein the input from the individual comprises spoken words.

3. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to claim 2, wherein said

repeating step further comprises performing a gradual determination of the identity of the

individual via issuing a stream of cues over time, each of said cues being indicative of

one or more user groups to which the individual belongs with a given degree of

confidence based upon repeated inputs of the individual.

4. (**Cancelled**)

5. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to Claim 2, wherein said

repeating step further comprises attributing to the individual at least one user group that is

distinct from any user group previously attributed.

6. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the method

steps further comprise: (e) identifying the individual in a final cue by narrowing down a

quantity of possible individuals into smaller user groups based upon repetition of steps

(a)-(c).

7. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the method

steps further comprise:

(e) computing a match score for the user group attributed to the individual

in step (b);

(f) computing a similarity score as a distance measure between vectors of the match score and a stored score corresponding to an enrollment of the individual; and

(g) accepting the individual as authentic if all similarity scores exceed a predetermined threshold.

8. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to Claim 1, wherein said repeating step comprises repeating steps (a)-(c) until the identity of the individual is authenticated.

9. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to Claim 8, wherein said repeating step comprises ~~of~~ repeating steps (a)-(c) until the identity of the individual is authenticated comprises performing a gradual authentication of an identity claim of the individual via issuing a stream of cues over time, each of said cues being indicative of one or more user groups to which the individual belongs with a given degree of confidence based upon repeated inputs of the individual.

10. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to Claim 8, wherein said repeating step comprises repeating steps (a)-(c) until the identity of the individual is authenticated comprises performing a partial authentication of an identity claim of the individual via issuing a stream of cues over time where there is an insufficient amount of inputs provided by the individual to perform a full identification.

11. (**Cancelled**)

12. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the method steps further comprise:

performing real time data retrieval; and

said step of performing real time data retrieval comprises employing issued cues to narrow down a database to be searched.

13. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to Claim 12, wherein:

said repeating step further comprises the step of performing real time discovery of the identity of the individual; and

said step of performing real time discovery comprises employing the issued cues to narrow down user models which may represent the individual.

14. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to Claim 13, wherein:

said repeating step further comprises the step of performing real time authentication of the individual; and

said step of performing real time authentication comprises employing the issued cues to narrow down relevant imposter models which do not represent the individual.

15. (**Currently Amended**) An apparatus for assessing the identity of an individual, said apparatus comprising:

an arrangement for accepting an input from an individual;

an arrangement for attributing at least one user group to the individual based on the input;

an arrangement for issuing a cue associated with the user group; and

an arrangement for assessing the identity of the individual incrementally;

wherein said arrangements for accepting, attributing and issuing are adapted to repeat the accepting, attributing and issuing for each of a plurality of inputs until the identity of the individual is assessed by the arrangement for assessing; ~~and~~

wherein the arrangement for assessing is adapted to incrementally assess the identity of the individual over a period of time via a series of issued cues<u>; and</u>

<u>wherein said arrangement for assessing is adapted to perform a partial determination of the identity of the individual when there is insufficient input provided by the individual to perform a full identification.</u>

16. (**Currently Amended**) The apparatus according to Claim ~~1~~ <u>15</u>, wherein said the input from an individual comprises spoken words.

17. (**Previously Presented**) The apparatus according to Claim 16, wherein said arrangement for assessing is adapted to perform a gradual determination of the identity of the individual over time, each of said cues being indicative of one or more user groups to which the individual belongs with a given degree of confidence.

18. (**Cancelled**)

19. (**Original**) The apparatus according to Claim 16, wherein said attributing arrangement is adapted to attribute to the individual at least one user group that is distinct from any user group previously attributed.

20. (**Previously Presented**) The apparatus according to Claim 19, wherein the individual is identified in a final cue by narrowing down a quantity of possible individuals into smaller user groups based upon repeated accepting, attributing and issuing.

21. (**Previously Presented**) The apparatus according to Claim 15, further comprising:

an arrangement for computing a match score for the user group attributed to the individual by the attributing arrangement;

an arrangement for computing a similarity score as a distance measure between vectors of the match score and a stored score corresponding to an enrollment of the individual; and

an arrangement for accepting the individual as authentic if all similarity scores exceed a predetermined threshold.

22. (**Cancelled**)

23. (**Cancelled**)

24. (**Cancelled**).

25. (**Cancelled**).

26. (**Currently Amended**) The apparatus according to Claim 25 15, wherein said arrangement for assessing is adapted to perform real time data retrieval, and wherein the issued cues are employed to narrow down a database to be searched.

27. (**Currently Amended**) The apparatus according to Claim 25 15, wherein said arrangement for assessing is adapted to perform real time discovery of the individual, and wherein the issued cues are employed to narrow down user models which may represent the individual.

28. (**Currently Amended**) The apparatus according to Claim 25 15, wherein said arrangement for assessing is adapted to perform real time authentication of the individual, wherein the issued cues are employed to narrow down relevant imposter models which do not represent the individual.

29. (**Currently Amended**) A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for assessing the identity of an individual, said method comprising the steps of:

a)(a) accepting an input from an individual;

(b) attributing a user group to the individual based upon the input;

(c) issuing a cue associated with the user group; and

(d) repeating steps (a) - (c) until the identity of the individual is assessed, the identity being assessed incrementally over a period of time via a series of issued cues;

wherein said repeating step further comprises performing a partial determination of the identity of the individual via issuing a stream of cues over time when there is insufficient input provided by the individual to perform a full identification.

30. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to claim 1, wherein the input from the individual comprises biometric data.

31. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to claim 30, wherein the biometric data comprises speech.

32. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to claim 30, wherein the biometric data comprises gait.